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PRESS RELEASE

AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION NAMES HILLCREST ONE OF “10 GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS” IN AMERICA

Urbane Community Lauded for Legacy of Activism and Trendsetting

**AWARD TO BE PRESENTED AT 7PM TONIGHT AT HILLCREST CENTENNIAL GALA
IN THE PRADO GRAND BALLROOM IN BALBOA PARK**

SAN DIEGO – Mayor Jerry Sanders, Councilmember Toni Atkins and Hillcrest business leaders and community representatives were formally notified Tuesday that Hillcrest has been designated as one of 10 Great Neighborhoods for 2007 through the American Planning Association’s (APA) *Great Places in America* program. The APA Great Places exemplify exceptional character and highlight the role planners and planning play in creating communities of lasting value.

The APA selected Hillcrest as one of 10 Great Neighborhoods in America because of its legacy of activism and trendsetting. Considered one of San Diego's most urbane neighborhoods, it has been and continues to be a source of social, cultural, and political influence.

The APA 10 Great Neighborhoods award will be presented to the community this evening at 7:00 p.m. during the Hillcrest Centennial Gala being held in the Grand Ballroom of The Prado in Balboa Park. The gala caps a year-long series of events celebrating Hillcrest’s 100th anniversary. Mike Stepner of the NewSchool of Architecture, representing the APA, and Bill Anderson, the City’s Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Land Use and Economic Development, will present the award to Councilmember Atkins and community representatives. Councilmember Atkins will also present the community with a special Council Resolution proclaiming “Hillcrest Centennial Day” in the City of San Diego.

"We are honored that one of our most historic and dynamic neighborhoods is being recognized on a national level," said Mayor Jerry Sanders. "Through a truly strong collaboration of

residents, businesses and government, our efforts in community planning and neighborhood revitalization continue to enhance the quality of life in Hillcrest and many other neighborhoods throughout the city of San Diego."

APA Great Places offer better choices for where and how people work and live. They are enjoyable, safe, and desirable. They are places where people want to be—not only to visit, but to live and work there everyday. America's truly great neighborhoods are defined by many unique criteria, including architectural features, accessibility, functionality, and community involvement. Through Great Places in America, APA recognizes the unique and authentic attributes of essential building blocks of great communities – streets, neighborhoods, and public spaces.

"On behalf of the Hillcrest neighborhood, I am thrilled we are receiving this honor recognizing Hillcrest as one of America's 'Great Places,'" said Councilmember Toni Atkins, whose Third District includes Hillcrest. "This community is a diverse and vibrant urban village and is a unique and special place to live and do business. The award is well-deserved."

From Hillcrest's start in 1907, experimental ideas and practices have taken hold. Hillcrest was one of the places where the progressive designs of Arts and Craft-influenced architect Irving Gill were built during the early 20th century. The neighborhood also has works by Hazel Waterman and Lillian Rice, who were among the first women to practice architecture in the U.S.

"Hillcrest is exceptional for many reasons, including its early architecture, smart growth-oriented redevelopment, and what it's done to accommodate pedestrians," said APA Executive Director Paul Farmer, FAICP. "Most important, however, are its residents and leaders, the people who've worked together to make Hillcrest the wonderful and memorable neighborhood that it is," he added.

Hillcrest's business community has been instrumental in working with the City of San Diego to make long-term improvements to the area. Neighborhood businesses have been pooling financial resources since 1984 with the creation of a Business Improvement District, managed by the Hillcrest Association, to encourage business development, improve the area and market the district to residents throughout the City and to visitors from all over the world.

Over the last decade, the City and the Hillcrest Association have worked on a number of improvements to enhance the pedestrian-oriented environment of the neighborhood's village-like commercial district, including new sidewalks, street trees, median landscaping and lighting. The City Planning & Community Investment Department has also worked directly with individual businesses to provide architectural design assistance and matching grant funds through the Storefront Improvement Program, which helps businesses renovate building exteriors to entice more customers and add to the ongoing community revitalization efforts.

Residents are also highly engaged, from organizing clean-up events to getting involved with local planning issues and hosting one of the nation's largest LGBT Pride festivals. Hillcrest activism and trendsetting were demonstrated when residents sought in the mid-1990s to replace a

closed foot bridge at Vermont Street. Officials refused to approve the project because it would not serve motor vehicles.

Undeterred, residents turned to the San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture for funds. A new footbridge was built—but as a "work of public art." Since then city officials have adopted a more accepting view of pedestrians, and today the city has a separate Pedestrian Master Plan.

The neighborhood also is where a shuttered Sears store in 1990 became one of the country's first compact, pedestrian-oriented and mixed-use redevelopments. Involving more than 200,000 square feet, the Uptown District development attracted national attention as an early model of "smart growth"—where low-density, obsolete sites in suburban-like locations are redeveloped for higher density commercial, retail, residential, and community uses.

Since the development of Uptown District, the City has adopted a City of Villages strategy that focuses growth into mixed-use villages that are pedestrian-friendly districts, of different scales, linked to an improved regional transit system.

For more information about Great Places designations and the list of APA's 10 Great Streets for 2007, visit www.planning.org/greatplaces.

For more information about City planning, as well as community revitalization efforts and small business development programs, visit www.sandiego.gov/cpci.

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